

## Abilene Approval Chart for Curriculum Changes

A = Approve      I = Information Item      R = Respond In Writing

Course Number: JMC 339 Sports Media

or Degree Plan(s):

|     |                                                                                                                          | Dept./School | College | Dean | TBC | AUAC/Grad | Provost |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------|------|-----|-----------|---------|
|     | <b>Campus-Level Academic Review<sup>1</sup></b>                                                                          |              |         |      |     |           |         |
|     | <b>Change to a Course</b><br>Include signatures from all chairs/program directors for cross-listed courses. <sup>1</sup> |              |         |      |     |           |         |
| 1.  | Title (description unchanged)                                                                                            | A            | A       | A    | I   | I         | I       |
| 2.  | Description (not affecting content)                                                                                      | A            | A       | A    | I   | I         | I       |
| 3.  | Course term(s)                                                                                                           | A            | I       | A    | I   | I         | I       |
| 4.  | Content (change of course outcomes)                                                                                      | A            | A       | A    | I   | I         | A       |
| 5.  | Number of credit hours                                                                                                   | A            | A       | A    | A   | A         | A       |
| 6.  | Course number within the hundred                                                                                         | A            | A       | I    | I   | I         | I       |
| 7.  | Course number beyond the hundred                                                                                         | A            | A       | A    | A   | A         | A       |
| 8.  | Prerequisites                                                                                                            | A            | A       | A    | I   | I         | I       |
| 9.  | Course restriction (e.g., majors only, junior standing)                                                                  | A            | A       | A    | A   | A         | A       |
| 10. | Level change (U to G or G to U)                                                                                          | A            | A       | A    | A   | A         | A       |
| 11. | Cross list course                                                                                                        | A            | A       | A    | A   | A         | A       |
| 12. | Department of record                                                                                                     | A            | A       | A    | A   | A         | A       |
| 13. | Open or close a course                                                                                                   | A            | A       | A    | A   | A         | A       |
|     | <b>Change to a Degree Plan</b>                                                                                           |              |         |      |     |           |         |
| 14. | Educational Program — Revise                                                                                             | A            | A       | A    | A   | A         | A       |
| 15. | Educational Program — Adopt/revise admission requirements                                                                | A            | A       | A    | A   | A         | A       |
| 16. | GPA — Revise program-required GPA                                                                                        | A            | A       | A    | A   | A         | A       |
| 17. | Minor — Revise                                                                                                           | A            | A       | A    | A   | A         | A       |

|     |                                                           | Dept./School | College | Dean | TEC | AUAC/Grad | Provost | Campus Faculty | Senior VPAA | President |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------|------|-----|-----------|---------|----------------|-------------|-----------|
|     | <b>Full Review</b>                                        |              |         |      |     |           |         |                |             |           |
|     | <b>Change to Catalog Information (for Campus)</b>         |              |         |      |     |           |         |                |             |           |
| 18. | General requirements for Bachelor's and Associate Degrees | -            | -       | -    | -   | A         | A       | A              | A           | I         |
| 19. | Policies governing academic probation and suspension      | -            | -       | -    | -   | A         | A       | A              | A           | I         |
| 20. | Requirements for graduating with honors                   | -            | -       | -    | -   | A         | A       | A              | A           | I         |
|     | <b>Change to a Degree Plan</b>                            |              |         |      |     |           |         |                |             |           |
| 21. | Educational Program — Add or Discontinue <sup>2,3</sup>   | A            | A       | A    | A   | A         | A       | A              | A           | I         |
| 22. | Educational Program — Discontinue (Provost-proposed)      | R            | -       | R    | A   | A         | A       | A              | A           | I         |
| 23. | Minor — Add or Discontinue                                | A            | A       | A    | A   | A         | A       | -              | A           | I         |
| 24. | Minor — Discontinue (Provost-proposed)                    | R            | -       | R    | A   | A         | A       | -              | A           | I         |
| 25. | Degree — Add or Discontinue                               | A            | A       | A    | A   | A         | A       | A              | A           | I         |
| 26. | Degree — Discontinue (Provost-proposed)                   | R            | -       | R    | A   | A         | A       | A              | A           | I         |

|     |                                                                             | Dept./School | College | Dean | AUAC | Provost | UGEC | University Faculty | Senior VPAA | President |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------|------|------|---------|------|--------------------|-------------|-----------|
|     | <b>Change to General Education Requirements for Undergraduates (System)</b> |              |         |      |      |         |      |                    |             |           |
| 27. | Change course outcomes of an included course                                | A            | A       | A    | A    | A       | A    | -                  | A           | I         |
| 28. | Add or drop a required course from the General Education Requirements       | A            | -       | A    | -    | A       | A    | A                  | A           | I         |
| 29. | Add or drop a course from a menu within the General Education Requirements  | A            | -       | A    | -    | A       | A    | -                  | A           | I         |
| 30. | Comprehensive revision of General Education Requirements                    | -            | -       | -    | -    | A       | A    | A                  | A           | I         |

#### Notes

<sup>2</sup> Any change to a cross-listed course requires the signature of both department chairs or program directors overseeing the course to ensure that the courses stay in sync. This includes courses taught at other campuses (e.g. BIBL 101 and BIBO 101).

<sup>3</sup> For undergraduate majors, a minimum of 30 hours is required. These programs must have a minimum of 6 elective hours, unless the requirements of external accrediting bodies make it impossible. Master's programs must include a minimum of 30 hours, and doctoral programs must include a minimum of 30 hours beyond the master's.

<sup>4</sup> When a department/school or dean proposes closing a program, approval routing follows the typical process beginning with the department/school. An administrative proposal by the provost or senior vice president for academic affairs would follow the "provost-proposed" routing on the chart.

Updated 8/1/2023



**Department/School(s)**

4-7-2026

Chair Signature

Date

Chair/Program Director Signature

Date



**College Academic Council(s)**

4-10-26

Chair Signature

Date

Chair Signature

Date



**Dean(s)**

4-10-26

Signature

Date

Signature

Date

**Teacher Education Council**

Signature

Date

**Campus Academic Council:  
Abilene Undergraduate or Abilene Graduate**

Signature

Date

**Provost**

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Signature

Date

**University General Education Council**

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Signature

Date

**University Faculty**

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Abilene Faculty Senate Chair signature

Date

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Dallas Faculty Council Chair signature

Date

**Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs**

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Signature

Date

**President**

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Signature

Date

# Abilene New Course Application

You may delete the preceding instructional pages before submitting application.

|                                              |         |
|----------------------------------------------|---------|
| Course ID ( <i>Subject Code and Number</i> ) | JMC 339 |
|----------------------------------------------|---------|

## 1. Systems and Catalog Information Complete each item.

|    |                                                                            |                                                                               |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A  | Course Developer                                                           | Kenneth Pybus                                                                 |
| B  | Course Instructor                                                          | Kenneth Pybus, Jonathan Smith                                                 |
| C  | Course Title                                                               | Sports Journalism                                                             |
| D  | Course Abbreviation for Banner<br>if title is more than 30 characters      |                                                                               |
| E  | College                                                                    | CAHSS - Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences ▾                               |
| F  | Department or School                                                       | JMC - Journalism & Mass Communication ▾                                       |
| G  | Number of Credit Hours                                                     | 3 ▾                                                                           |
| G1 | Number of Lecture Contact Hours                                            | 3 ▾                                                                           |
| G2 | Number of Lab Contact Hours                                                | 0 ▾                                                                           |
| H  | Is the course for a fixed or variable<br>number of credit hours?           | Fixed ▾<br>If variable, explain rationale:                                    |
| I  | Is the course repeatable for additional<br>credit?                         | No ▾                                                                          |
| J  | Maximum total number of credit hours<br>a student can earn for this course | 3                                                                             |
| K  | Course Schedule Type                                                       | Lecture (LEC) ▾<br>See Schedule Type definitions in the Reference<br>section. |
| L  | Number of Faculty Workload Hours                                           | 3 ▾                                                                           |
| M  | Grading Mode                                                               | Standard ▾                                                                    |
| N  | Maximum Enrollment                                                         | 15                                                                            |

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| O  | <b>Catalog Description</b><br>(50 words or less)                                                                                                                                    | Introduction to the principles and practices of sports journalism across print, broadcast, and digital platforms, emphasizing reporting, writing, interviewing, and ethical storytelling in sports media. Students will produce multimedia sports content through hands-on assignments, preparing them to contribute to outlets such as ESPN+ and student media while developing industry-ready skills. |
| P  | List any prerequisites (course/s, test scores, class standing, major, etc.)                                                                                                         | JMC 324 – Advanced Reporting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Q  | List any corequisites (these <i>must</i> be taken at the same time; note that a single requirement cannot be both a prerequisite <i>and</i> a corequisite)                          | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| R  | If the course is cross-listed, specify the subject code and course number of the other course                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| S  | Does this course require any additional student course fees?                                                                                                                        | No ▾<br>If yes, attach a completed <a href="#">course fee form</a> (see form "Request to Add or Change Course Fees").                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| T1 | Will the course be offered in <b>fall</b> terms?                                                                                                                                    | No ▾                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| T2 | Will the course be offered in <b>spring</b> terms?                                                                                                                                  | Yes, even years ▾                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| T3 | Will the course be offered in <b>summer</b> terms?                                                                                                                                  | No ▾                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| U  | First semester this course will be offered under new Course ID. <i>May not be earlier than the coming fall semester.</i>                                                            | Spring 2028                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| V  | Is this course required for a program(s)?                                                                                                                                           | Yes ▾<br>If yes, submit a separate completed <a href="#">curriculum proposal</a> to change the program(s).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| W  | Should the addition of this course be retroactively applied to the degree plan it supports? <i>This is rare, and rationale should explain compelling extenuating circumstances.</i> | No ▾<br>If yes, provide rationale:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

|   |                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| X | Has this course been offered as a Special Topics course? <i>New courses are not required to be taught as Special Topics courses prior to approval.</i>                                                 | Yes ▾<br>If yes, provide course ID, term, and enrollment:<br>JMC 441 Topics in Journalism, spring 2026, 12<br>JMC 441 Topics in Journalism, spring 2024, 11<br>JMC 441 Topics in Journalism, fall 2021, 9 |
| Y | List any courses in which the content overlaps the proposed course. (Course ID and Name). <i>Attach a statement from the instructor/dept chair of the existing course justifying the new offering.</i> | None.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

## 2. Curriculum

- A. Explain any effects of this course on any degree plans. If the addition of the course alters program requirements, submit a separate [Approval Chart for Curriculum Change](#) to update the program.
- B. Justify the addition of this course to the current curriculum, explaining the gap it meets.

The course has been part of the standard JMC 441 Topics in Journalism course rotation since Fall 2014, serving the Journalism major. Prior to that it was taught as a special topics course. The addition of the Sports Media degree will necessitate creating a standalone course with a dedicated schedule.

## 3. Course Design

- A. Audience and Course Goal
  1. Describe the intended audience, including prerequisite skills.
  2. State the overarching course goal(s) in performance terms.

### B. Student Learning Outcomes and Measurements

|   | Student Learning Outcome                                      | Measurement                                                                                                               |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Develop an understanding of the history of sports journalism. | Exam 1 questions evaluating knowledge of significant sports journalism history                                            |
| 2 | Analyze and write about common sports journalism subjects.    | Development, reporting and completion of several types of sports stories, including news, features and enterprise stories |
| 3 | Develop proficiency in using social media to cover sports.    | Assignments to live-tweet sporting events and produce appropriate immediate post-event coverage.                          |

|   |                                                                                    |                                                 |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | Study and understand modern trends and current events affecting sports journalism. | Performance on in-class current events quizzes. |
| 5 |                                                                                    |                                                 |

### C. Text and Resources

Give the full publication information of the textbook/s and other required resources and outside readings.

Gisondi, J. (2018). Field Guide to Covering Sports (Second Edition).  
The Associated Press Stylebook (online or print editions)

## 4. Supporting Documentation

| Required of all applications |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1                            | <a href="#">Approval Chart for Curriculum Changes</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 2                            | <b>Syllabus</b> — Attach the syllabus for the course based upon the anticipated first-semester offering.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 4                            | <b>Library</b> — Submit new course application and syllabus to the Library dean's office. Attach the Library's memo.                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Attach if applicable         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 5                            | <b>Content Overlap</b> — Include one document for each course you listed in Section 1Y. Attach statement from instructor/dept chair of existing course justifying the new offering.                                                                                                                                              |
| 6                            | <b>Departmental Resources</b> — List the resources that support the course and are available only through the department, if applicable. Attach the list of the holdings and the location(s).                                                                                                                                    |
| 7                            | <b>Resources</b> — List resources (other than library or departmental resources) that are needed to support this course (computers, lab equipment, other technology, etc.). Attach a complete list of all items and indicate possible sources or estimated cost of each. List the sources of any needed funds.                   |
| 8                            | <b>Expenses</b> — List additional expenses needed to implement this course (full-time or part-time faculty, graduate or lab assistants, student employees, travel, special student costs, room renovation, storage facility, etc.). Attach a complete list of all items, the estimated cost of each and the source of the funds. |



## **JMC 339 Sports Journalism** ***Sports Journalism***

Spring 2027 • M 6-8:50 p.m. • Don Morris 320 • 3 credit hours

Instructor: Kenneth R. Pybus, J.D., Ph.D.

Office: Don H. Morris 301B • Office hours: By appointment MWF 9-11 a.m.

Email: kenneth.pybus@acu.edu • Office Phone: 325-674-2553

Course Description: Introduction to the principles and practices of sports journalism across print, broadcast, and digital platforms, emphasizing reporting, writing, interviewing, and ethical storytelling in sports media. Students will produce multimedia sports content through hands-on assignments, preparing them to contribute to outlets such as ESPN+ and student media while developing industry-ready skills. Prerequisite: JMC 324 – Advanced Reporting.

### **Course Objective**

Learn advanced methods and tactics of journalism with an emphasis on sports reporting, interviewing and storytelling.

### **Learning Objectives, Competencies and Measurements**

After completion of the course, students – at different levels of expertise as indicated by grade – will be able to:

- Develop an understanding of the history of sports journalism. This competency will be measured through:
  - Exam 1 questions evaluating knowledge of significant sports journalism history
- Analyze and write about common journalism subjects. This competency will be measured through:
  - Development, reporting and completion of several types of sports stories, including news, features and enterprise stories
- Develop proficiency in using social media to cover sports. This competency will be measured through:
  - Assignments to live-tweet sporting events and produce appropriate immediate post-event coverage.
- Study and understand modern trends and current events affecting sports journalism.
  - Performance on in-class current events quizzes.

### **Intended Audience**

This course is designed as an advanced journalism course, building on the skills learned in JMC 324, with an emphasis on sports reporting, interviewing and storytelling. It is designed for upper-level sports media majors and journalism majors in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication.

### **Outline of Topics**

Topics covered in this course may include, but are not limited to:

- Understanding basic style, form and guidelines followed in written coverage of sports events.
- Tracking and interpreting statistics to inform sports event coverage.
- Identifying and accessing sources vital to good sports reporting.
- Conducting interviews in a variety of settings.
- Understanding the concept of a second-day story angle and applying it to sports events and breaking news.
- Writing assignment responses and/or news stories that shed new light on a news-making topic or person in sports.
- Covering a sports event on deadline, using multiple platforms.
- Finding, reporting and writing a timely and interesting sports profile.

### **Course Tools**

- Gisoni, J. (2018). Field Guide to Covering Sports (Second Edition).
- The Associated Press Stylebook (online or print editions)
- Other readings provided by the instructor

### **Grading**

#### *Grading scale*

A = 92-100  
B = 83-91  
C = 74-82  
D = 65-73  
F = Lower than 65

#### *Grading calculations*

The emphasis in this class will be on producing professional-quality journalistic writing. The grading system will reflect this emphasis:

- Thematic Feature: 30%
- Personality Profile: 20%
- Breaking Sports Reporting: 20%
- Sports opinion column: 10%
- Quizzes and In-class Assignments: 10%
- Class Participation: 10%

#### *Grading criteria for stories*

(See more detailed Story Grading Criteria at the end of this document.)

- A (92-100): Needs only minor word usage and/or punctuation editing.
- B (83-91): Needs some structural editing but no additional reporting.
- C (74-82): Needs some structural editing and some additional reporting.
- D (65-73): Basic framework in place but needs significant additional reporting.
- F (<65): Assignment needs to be entirely resubmitted.

## The Assignments

*Live Sports Event on deadline.* You will cover two sports events outside the classroom and file your story on a strict deadline. These stories will be 500 to 800 words.

*Sports Opinion Column.* You will develop and write one opinion piece. It should be well researched. It should take a definitive stance on the issue but should be fair. These columns will be about 500 words.

*Sports Personality Profile.* You will complete an athletic feature story, focusing on a coach, player or some other participant. This will be a tightly focused story about an individual. Not a puff piece. This story will be 750 to 1,000 words.

*A Thematic Feature.* This will be a long-term enterprise project. The feature should be a long look into a sports subject. It could be about a person, or a team, or a league, or a trend or an aspect of sports that has been overlooked. You should think about this for the first third of the semester, begin the reporting in the middle third of the semester and finish the reporting while working to completion during the final third of the semester. **The feature will include two deliverables: a print piece and a medium of your choice (podcast, video, photo feature, etc.)** Expect to be asked for outlines and memos regarding your project throughout the semester. You will file early drafts of your story. Get started early, this is not the sort of thing you can cram in the final days. About 1,500 words.

*In-Class Assignments.* We occasionally will have in-class assignments and quizzes that can be completed through Canvas. These will be short assignments that occasionally require reading, writing and student response.

## Story Guidelines

- A minimum of two human sources is required for every story. More may be necessary to tell some stories.
- You must include context when attributing statements to websites, press releases, etc. Here are some examples for attribution:
  - according to a website sponsored by ...
  - according to a press release from ...
  - according to a report issued by ...
  - according to a letter sent by ...
- Students will not use e-mail as a primary interviewing tool but will do face-to-face interviews with all primary and secondary sources. The tool is generally not acceptable in the profession and cannot be accommodated by the JMC Department. E-mail may be used for follow-up questions, or as a means of forwarding pre-interview questions with a caveat to the source that questions might stray from the e-mail. Accuracy checks of direct quotes or technical data may be executed with sources via e-mail.
- Make it accurate. Every sentence should be correct, so that every person on either side of a controversy could agree that each sentence is factually correct. Re-read every sentence to see if you think it is accurate on its own.

- Get lots of information, more than you think you need. Write long; edit short. This always makes for a better story.
- Attribute all statements of opinion, all value-laden terms, to the person whose opinion is being reflected in the statement.

### **Deadlines**

Each assignment will have a specified deadline. Failure to turn a story in on time will result in an automatic letter-grade drop. Failure to complete an assigned story will result in a zero. A second zero will result in dismissal from the course. All assignments due in class will be due in Canvas by 8:50 p.m. that class day.

### **Other Information**

- Cell phones and other electronic devices will be turned off during class, unless serving a specific, class-related purpose. Technology that distracts during class time will be confiscated.
- During class time, students will not check or write personal email or work on assignments for other classes. The instructor will indicate specific times when computer monitors should be turned off to eliminate distraction.
- Students should protect the confidentiality of passwords and ID cards; sharing them can result in denial of access and dismissal from the course. After-hours guests in the building and labs must have clearance from JMC chair. Do not prop open classroom doors that are intended to lock.
- Wise students will have a copy of any stories they are working on for class available to them during class periods in case they need to ask questions or have class time to work. Students who write stories at home on another computer are required to transfer final copies into their home folder to have access to them during class at a later time.

## Story Grading Criteria

### THE LEAD (25%)

- Clear, concise, creative (bonus: +3 to +7).
- Buried lead (-10); backed into lead (-5).
- Theme/news peg unclear (-5 to -10); lacks support for lead (-5 to -10).
- Other writing problems in lead. (-5 to -10)

### REPORTING (25%)

- Depth to cover theme? (-5 to -15) (bonus +3 to +7).
- Key source not contacted; single source; unnecessary JMC source (-10).
- Fact errors, misquotes (-5 to -10).
- Missing ID, improper ID (-10); incorrect title, missing title, bad title (-10).
- Inferential errors, unfounded assumptions, non sequiturs (-10).
- Context, clarification, explanation needed (-5).
- Short of agreed length (-5 to -20).

### DEVELOPMENT/ORGANIZATION (25%)

- Logical development.
- News judgment; irrelevant info (-3 to -20); editorialization (-15).
- Misuse of first or second person (-5).
- Attribution missing (-5), attribution misplaced (-2).
- Transitions missing or inadequate (-5); logical links missing (-3).
- Dull, confusing, awkward or irrelevant quotes used (-3).
- Misuse of short sentences (-3).
- Wordiness (-3); redundancy (-3); clichés, jargon, slang (-3).
- Overuse of contractions, parentheses (-3); awkward construction (-3).
- Dead construction (-3); subject-verb order (-3).

### MECHANICS (25%)

- Misspelled proper name (-10); misspelled word (-10).
- Overuse of passive voice (-5 to -15)
- Misuse of words (e.g., they/their/them), wrong word, word missing (-5).
- Verb tense or verb usage incorrect (-5).
- Run-ons, fragments (-5); incorrect possessives (-5).
- Difficult word choice problems (-3): very, since/because, more/fewer than, that/which, who/whom, currently, approximately, etc.
- Other grammar problems (-5).
- Punctuation, style errors (-1).

### BONUS/PENALTIES

- No. of sources: 3+ sources = (+5)
- Missed deadline (one letter grade)

## **ACU Mission Statement**

The mission of Abilene Christian University is to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world.

## **College Mission Statement**

The College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at Abilene Christian University educates students for worldwide Christian service and leadership through programs of study and other learning experiences that blend a liberal arts education with professional and career education.

## **Department Mission Statement**

The mission of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication is to plan, organize and implement an undergraduate and graduate journalism and mass communication teaching program that reflects commitment to the education of an effective graduate who will appreciate the interaction of spiritual, academic, societal and professional values within the context of the university and college missions.

## **Integration of Faith and Learning**

The news professionals of our day voluntarily adhere to various sets of ethical canons. Students in journalism courses are expected to live by these standards in performing newsgathering duties. In addition to these ethical standards, students are expected to live by a higher set of standards – those established by Jesus Christ – while recognizing and protecting the public's right to freedom of information.

## **JMC Attendance Policy**

### *Value of Attendance*

The JMC faculty values attendance at every class session. We believe students with superior attendance perform better than students with average or poor attendance. The teacher may require a student to produce documentation of absence causes. Penalties will be imposed for excessive absences unless they are caused by:

- Serious illness of the student.
- Death or critical illness in immediate family.
- Approved university off-campus activities.
- Other absolutely unavoidable occurrences.

### *Penalties*

Students whose absences do not meet above criteria may be penalized:

- 5 MWF absences = minus one letter grade
- 4 MW or TR absences = minus one letter grade
- 2 one-day-a-week classes = minus one letter grade

### *Withdrawals Tied to Absences*

When a student's absences reach these levels, including university approved absences, the student will be withdrawn from the class:

- 9 MWF classes,
- or 6 MW or TR classes,
- or 3 one-day-a-week classes, the student will be dropped from the class regardless of the reasons for the absences. The grade will be WP if the absences fit the criteria described under "Value of Attendance." Otherwise the grade will be WF.

### *University Activity Participation*

Under university policy, a student who is required to miss a class to participate in a school activity by the academic administration will not be penalized by the teacher for missing that class. ... The student should not be penalized for the absence approved under this policy if he or she has satisfactorily made up the missed work within the time limit and in the manner agreed upon by the student and the professor. ... [E]ach professor may, but is not required to, drop a student from his or her class for nonattendance (absences in excess of 20% of the total meetings of the class) or for disruptive behavior in classrooms...

### **Academic Integrity**

Three elements of contemporary journalism and mass communication pose unique integrity challenges for faculty, staff, students and practitioners: (a) the public nature of these functions in society, (b) the absolute necessity to build and maintain credibility and reliability, and (c) the dangers brought on by the ease with which digital data can be stolen, copied, multiplied, manipulated and used to mislead and deceive.

Breakdowns of all forms of academic integrity in JMC classrooms, labs and student media are condemned categorically by the faculty of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication: in group projects, research papers, exams, out-of-class assignments, in-class work, individual projects, lab work, material prepared for public distribution via departmental media, internships, résumés, and in JMC-sponsored organizations.

### **Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence**

Generative AI is a rapidly evolving tool that produces information as text or images in response to a prompt. As with any tool, it can benefit the user or cause damage. Use of generative AI poses risks to students who use it indiscriminately. The learning process involves processing ideas and information over time; this is undermined when AI assembles and organizes information within minutes. By employing generative AI, the student's higher-order thinking and internalization of knowledge is inhibited.

In addition, output from generative AI may include inaccurate or false statements, undermining the author's reliability. The quality of the output may be poor or generic, failing to meet the standards expected of graduating college seniors. In the end, the student is responsible for both the accuracy and quality of the work he or she submits.

Finally, when using generative AI to accomplish short-term goals, students may lose motivation to attempt the work themselves and become overly dependent on AI for larger and more significant tasks. Ultimately, misuse of generative AI undermines the purpose of this course and negatively impacts a student's preparedness for his or her future career.

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### **Diversity Perspective**

Those who control the flow of images in the mass media have a responsibility to their audience to illustrate messages in a fair and truthful manner, without bias or prejudice, and with careful consideration to creating imagery that does not reinforce societal stereotypes.

## **JMC 339 Sports Journalism** ***Sports Journalism***

Spring 2027 • M 6-8:50 p.m. • Don Morris 320 • 3 credit hours

Instructor: Kenneth R. Pybus, J.D., Ph.D.

Office: Don H. Morris 301B • Office hours: By appointment MWF 9-11 a.m.  
Email: kenneth.pybus@acu.edu • Office Phone: 325-674-2553

Course Description: Introduction to the principles and practices of sports journalism across print, broadcast, and digital platforms, emphasizing reporting, writing, interviewing, and ethical storytelling in sports media. Students will produce multimedia sports content through hands-on assignments, preparing them to contribute to outlets such as ESPN+ and student media while developing industry-ready skills. Prerequisite: JMC 324 – Advanced Reporting.

### **Course Objective**

Learn advanced methods and tactics of journalism with an emphasis on sports reporting, interviewing and storytelling.

### **Learning Objectives, Competencies and Measurements**

After completion of the course, students – at different levels of expertise as indicated by grade – will be able to:

- Develop an understanding of the history of sports journalism. This competency will be measured through:
  - Exam 1 questions evaluating knowledge of significant sports journalism history
- Analyze and write about common journalism subjects. This competency will be measured through:
  - Development, reporting and completion of several types of sports stories, including news, features and enterprise stories
- Develop proficiency in using social media to cover sports. This competency will be measured through:
  - Assignments to live-tweet sporting events and produce appropriate immediate post-event coverage.
- Study and understand modern trends and current events affecting sports journalism.
  - Performance on in-class current events quizzes.

### **Intended Audience**

This course is designed as an advanced journalism course, building on the skills learned in JMC 324, with an emphasis on sports reporting, interviewing and storytelling. It is designed for upper-level sports media majors and journalism majors in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication.

### **Outline of Topics**

Topics covered in this course may include, but are not limited to:

- Understanding basic style, form and guidelines followed in written coverage of sports events.
- Tracking and interpreting statistics to inform sports event coverage.
- Identifying and accessing sources vital to good sports reporting.
- Conducting interviews in a variety of settings.
- Understanding the concept of a second-day story angle and applying it to sports events and breaking news.
- Writing assignment responses and/or news stories that shed new light on a news-making topic or person in sports.
- Covering a sports event on deadline, using multiple platforms.
- Finding, reporting and writing a timely and interesting sports profile.

### **Course Tools**

- Gisoni, J. (2018). Field Guide to Covering Sports (Second Edition).
- The Associated Press Stylebook (online or print editions)
- Other readings provided by the instructor

### **Grading**

#### *Grading scale*

|     |               |
|-----|---------------|
| A = | 92-100        |
| B = | 83-91         |
| C = | 74-82         |
| D = | 65-73         |
| F = | Lower than 65 |

#### *Grading calculations*

The emphasis in this class will be on producing professional-quality journalistic writing. The grading system will reflect this emphasis:

- Thematic Feature: 30%
- Personality Profile: 20%
- Breaking Sports Reporting: 20%
- Sports opinion column: 10%
- Quizzes and In-class Assignments: 10%
- Class Participation: 10%

#### *Grading criteria for stories*

(See more detailed Story Grading Criteria at the end of this document.)

- A (92-100): Needs only minor word usage and/or punctuation editing.
- B (83-91): Needs some structural editing but no additional reporting.
- C (74-82): Needs some structural editing and some additional reporting.
- D (65-73): Basic framework in place but needs significant additional reporting.
- F (<65): Assignment needs to be entirely resubmitted.

## The Assignments

*Live Sports Event on deadline.* You will cover two sports events outside the classroom and file your story on a strict deadline. These stories will be 500 to 800 words.

*Sports Opinion Column.* You will develop and write one opinion piece. It should be well researched. It should take a definitive stance on the issue but should be fair. These columns will be about 500 words.

*Sports Personality Profile.* You will complete an athletic feature story, focusing on a coach, player or some other participant. This will be a tightly focused story about an individual. Not a puff piece. This story will be 750 to 1,000 words.

*A Thematic Feature.* This will be a long-term enterprise project. The feature should be a long look into a sports subject. It could be about a person, or a team, or a league, or a trend or an aspect of sports that has been overlooked. You should think about this for the first third of the semester, begin the reporting in the middle third of the semester and finish the reporting while working to completion during the final third of the semester. **The feature will include two deliverables: a print piece and a medium of your choice (podcast, video, photo feature, etc.)** Expect to be asked for outlines and memos regarding your project throughout the semester. You will file early drafts of your story. Get started early, this is not the sort of thing you can cram in the final days. About 1,500 words.

*In-Class Assignments.* We occasionally will have in-class assignments and quizzes that can be completed through Canvas. These will be short assignments that occasionally require reading, writing and student response.

## Story Guidelines

- A minimum of two human sources is required for every story. More may be necessary to tell some stories.
- You must include context when attributing statements to websites, press releases, etc. Here are some examples for attribution:
  - according to a website sponsored by ...
  - according to a press release from ...
  - according to a report issued by ...
  - according to a letter sent by ...
- Students will not use e-mail as a primary interviewing tool but will do face-to-face interviews with all primary and secondary sources. The tool is generally not acceptable in the profession and cannot be accommodated by the JMC Department. E-mail may be used for follow-up questions, or as a means of forwarding pre-interview questions with a caveat to the source that questions might stray from the e-mail. Accuracy checks of direct quotes or technical data may be executed with sources via e-mail.
- Make it accurate. Every sentence should be correct, so that every person on either side of a controversy could agree that each sentence is factually correct. Re-read every sentence to see if you think it is accurate on its own.

- Get lots of information, more than you think you need. Write long; edit short. This always makes for a better story.
- Attribute all statements of opinion, all value-laden terms, to the person whose opinion is being reflected in the statement.

### **Deadlines**

Each assignment will have a specified deadline. Failure to turn a story in on time will result in an automatic letter-grade drop. Failure to complete an assigned story will result in a zero. A second zero will result in dismissal from the course. All assignments due in class will be due in Canvas by 8:50 p.m. that class day.

### **Other Information**

- Cell phones and other electronic devices will be turned off during class, unless serving a specific, class-related purpose. Technology that distracts during class time will be confiscated.
- During class time, students will not check or write personal email or work on assignments for other classes. The instructor will indicate specific times when computer monitors should be turned off to eliminate distraction.
- Students should protect the confidentiality of passwords and ID cards; sharing them can result in denial of access and dismissal from the course. After-hours guests in the building and labs must have clearance from JMC chair. Do not prop open classroom doors that are intended to lock.
- Wise students will have a copy of any stories they are working on for class available to them during class periods in case they need to ask questions or have class time to work. Students who write stories at home on another computer are required to transfer final copies into their home folder to have access to them during class at a later time.

## Story Grading Criteria

### THE LEAD (25%)

- Clear, concise, creative (bonus: +3 to +7).
- Buried lead (-10); backed into lead (-5).
- Theme/news peg unclear (-5 to -10); lacks support for lead (-5 to -10).
- Other writing problems in lead. (-5 to -10)

### REPORTING (25%)

- Depth to cover theme? (-5 to -15) (bonus +3 to +7).
- Key source not contacted; single source; unnecessary JMC source (-10).
- Fact errors, misquotes (-5 to -10).
- Missing ID, improper ID (-10); incorrect title, missing title, bad title (-10).
- Inferential errors, unfounded assumptions, non sequiturs (-10).
- Context, clarification, explanation needed (-5).
- Short of agreed length (-5 to -20).

### DEVELOPMENT/ORGANIZATION (25%)

- Logical development.
- News judgment; irrelevant info (-3 to -20); editorialization (-15).
- Misuse of first or second person (-5).
- Attribution missing (-5), attribution misplaced (-2).
- Transitions missing or inadequate (-5); logical links missing (-3).
- Dull, confusing, awkward or irrelevant quotes used (-3).
- Misuse of short sentences (-3).
- Wordiness (-3); redundancy (-3); clichés, jargon, slang (-3).
- Overuse of contractions, parentheses (-3); awkward construction (-3).
- Dead construction (-3); subject-verb order (-3).

### MECHANICS (25%)

- Misspelled proper name (-10); misspelled word (-10).
- Overuse of passive voice (-5 to -15)
- Misuse of words (e.g., they/their/them), wrong word, word missing (-5).
- Verb tense or verb usage incorrect (-5).
- Run-ons, fragments (-5); incorrect possessives (-5).
- Difficult word choice problems (-3): very, since/because, more/fewer than, that/which, who/whom, currently, approximately, etc.
- Other grammar problems (-5).
- Punctuation, style errors (-1).

### BONUS/PENALTIES

- No. of sources: 3+ sources = (+5)
- Missed deadline (one letter grade)

## **ACU Mission Statement**

The mission of Abilene Christian University is to educate students for Christian service and leadership throughout the world.

## **College Mission Statement**

The College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at Abilene Christian University educates students for worldwide Christian service and leadership through programs of study and other learning experiences that blend a liberal arts education with professional and career education.

## **Department Mission Statement**

The mission of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication is to plan, organize and implement an undergraduate and graduate journalism and mass communication teaching program that reflects commitment to the education of an effective graduate who will appreciate the interaction of spiritual, academic, societal and professional values within the context of the university and college missions.

## **Integration of Faith and Learning**

The news professionals of our day voluntarily adhere to various sets of ethical canons. Students in journalism courses are expected to live by these standards in performing newsgathering duties. In addition to these ethical standards, students are expected to live by a higher set of standards – those established by Jesus Christ – while recognizing and protecting the public's right to freedom of information.

## **JMC Attendance Policy**

### *Value of Attendance*

The JMC faculty values attendance at every class session. We believe students with superior attendance perform better than students with average or poor attendance. The teacher may require a student to produce documentation of absence causes. Penalties will be imposed for excessive absences unless they are caused by:

- Serious illness of the student.
- Death or critical illness in immediate family.
- Approved university off-campus activities.
- Other absolutely unavoidable occurrences.

### *Penalties*

Students whose absences do not meet above criteria may be penalized:

- 5 MWF absences = minus one letter grade
- 4 MW or TR absences = minus one letter grade
- 2 one-day-a-week classes = minus one letter grade

### *Withdrawals Tied to Absences*

When a student's absences reach these levels, including university approved absences, the student will be withdrawn from the class:

- 9 MWF classes,
- or 6 MW or TR classes,
- or 3 one-day-a-week classes, the student will be dropped from the class regardless of the reasons for the absences. The grade will be WP if the absences fit the criteria described under "Value of Attendance." Otherwise the grade will be WF.

### *University Activity Participation*

Under university policy, a student who is required to miss a class to participate in a school activity by the academic administration will not be penalized by the teacher for missing that class. ... The student should not be penalized for the absence approved under this policy if he or she has satisfactorily made up the missed work within the time limit and in the manner agreed upon by the student and the professor. ... [E]ach professor may, but is not required to, drop a student from his or her class for nonattendance (absences in excess of 20% of the total meetings of the class) or for disruptive behavior in classrooms...

### **Academic Integrity**

Three elements of contemporary journalism and mass communication pose unique integrity challenges for faculty, staff, students and practitioners: (a) the public nature of these functions in society, (b) the absolute necessity to build and maintain credibility and reliability, and (c) the dangers brought on by the ease with which digital data can be stolen, copied, multiplied, manipulated and used to mislead and deceive.

Breakdowns of all forms of academic integrity in JMC classrooms, labs and student media are condemned categorically by the faculty of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication: in group projects, research papers, exams, out-of-class assignments, in-class work, individual projects, lab work, material prepared for public distribution via departmental media, internships, résumés, and in JMC-sponsored organizations.

### **Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence**

Generative AI is a rapidly evolving tool that produces information as text or images in response to a prompt. As with any tool, it can benefit the user or cause damage. Use of generative AI poses risks to students who use it indiscriminately. The learning process involves processing ideas and information over time; this is undermined when AI assembles and organizes information within minutes. By employing generative AI, the student's higher-order thinking and internalization of knowledge is inhibited.

In addition, output from generative AI may include inaccurate or false statements, undermining the author's reliability. The quality of the output may be poor or generic, failing to meet the standards expected of graduating college seniors. In the end, the student is responsible for both the accuracy and quality of the work he or she submits.

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# ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

## LIBRARY

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### M E M O R A N D U M

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**DATE:** April 8, 2026  
**TO:** Dr. Ken Pybus  
**FROM:** Mark McCallon, Associate Dean for Library Services  
**RE:** Course Application for JMC 339 – Sports Journalism

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After reviewing the course application and syllabus, the library can support the proposed course. Please contact Susannah Barrington, Librarian Liaison, if additional library resources are needed to support the course. Thank you for the opportunity to evaluate the syllabus.



April 8, 2026

Dr. Kenneth Pybus  
Professor, Department Chair  
Journalism and Mass Communication  
Don H. Morris Center (DMC) 301B  
(325) 674-2553

Re: Sports Journalism (JMC 339)

Dear Dr. Pybus,

Thank you for the submission of JMC 339: Sports Journalism for review. I have reviewed it based on the ACU Syllabus Guidelines. I found the syllabus to meet all aspects of the checklist.

Please note that this letter is intended as a reference, which will be read by the department chair and council members, who may also have questions or comments of their own. If you have any questions, please feel free to let me know.

Please also let me know if we can help in the design and facilitation of this course.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Amos Gutierrez".

Dr. Amos Gutierrez  
Director of Instructional Design, Adams Center



Kenneth Pybus &lt;krp03c@acu.edu&gt;

---

**Approval for requirements of COBA courses**

2 messages

**Kenneth Pybus** <krp03c@acu.edu>

Mon, Apr 6, 2026 at 9:57 PM

To: Phil Vardiman &lt;pxv02b@acu.edu&gt;, Jennifer Golden &lt;jennifer.golden@acu.edu&gt;

Cc: Hutton Harris &lt;hutton.harris@acu.edu&gt;

Drs. Vardiman and Golden,

Thank you for a profitable discussion today. If I understand correctly, you are in support of adding the following COBA courses as requirements to the degree plan for the proposed B.S. in Sports Media:

- MKTG 320 Principles of Marketing or MGMT 330 Management and Organizational Behavior
- MKTG 333 Sports Administration (with a waiver of BUSA 120)

Please let me know whether you understand your support for this proposal correctly.

Kenneth

--

Kenneth R. Pybus, J.D., Ph.D.

Professor and Chair, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Abilene Christian University

ACU Box 27892

Abilene, Texas 79699

325-674-2553

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**Phil Vardiman** <pxv02b@acu.edu>

Tue, Apr 7, 2026 at 11:42 AM

To: Kenneth Pybus &lt;krp03c@acu.edu&gt;

Cc: Jennifer Golden &lt;jennifer.golden@acu.edu&gt;, Hutton Harris &lt;hutton.harris@acu.edu&gt;, Laura Phillips &lt;lcp05a@acu.edu&gt;

Kenneth,

Yes, this is correct. I am also copying Laura Phillips in this email to make sure she is in the loop :). Just in case she has some questions.

Phil

[Quoted text hidden]

--

**Phil Vardiman, PhD, SHRM-SCP**

Professor &amp; Department Chair

College of Business Administration

325-674-2153